

Message Text

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ACTION EB-03

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5533

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 742

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, CH, UK, HK

SUBJECT: PEKING-HONG KONG DIRECT AIR LINK: IMPASSE STILL UNRESOLVED

1. UK EMBOFF, WHO ASKED THAT HIS REMARKS BE HELD CLOSELY
MENTIONED TO US APRIL 22 THAT BRITISH HAD RECENTLY
APPROACHED CHINESE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RE-OPENING
DISCUSSIONS ON A PEKING-HONG KONG DIRECT AIR LINK DURING
VISIT OF BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY IN MAY AND THAT
CHINESE HAD POLITELY TURNED DOWN THIS SUGGESTED AGENDA
ITEM.

2. EMBOFF WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT CONCLUSION OF HONG
KONG-PEKING AIR LINK AGREEMENT IN FORSEEABLE FUTURE.
POLITICAL FACTORS ARE NOT THE ONLY CONSIDERATION. IN
SIMPLE PHYSICAL TERMS, BRITISH CAN NOT BE AS FLEXIBLE
AS JAPANESE, SINCE KAITAK IS ONLY AIRPORT IN COLONY
WHERE PRC AND TAIWAN FLIGHTS CAN LAND. ECONOMIC
CONSIDERATIONS ALSO TEND TO REINFORCE PRESENT IMPASSE
--THE CHINESE, WITH THEIR LUCRATIVE DETOUR THROUGH
CANTON TO PEKING, LOSE NOTHING BY INSISTING ON A
BRITISH POSITION AT LEAST AS FORTHCOMING AS THE
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JAPANESE, WHILE THE BRITISH ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO

CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD LIKELY PRECIPITATE
TAIWAN RETALIATION AGAINST THE COLONY'S CATHAY
PACIFIC AIRLINE, WHOSE HONG KONG-TAIPEI-TOKYO ROUTE
IS ITS MOST PROFITABLE.

3. BY WAY OF BACKGROUND, EMBOFF STATED THAT IN 1973
AIR LINK AGREEMENT HAD BEEN DRAFTED, INITIALED AND
WAS ON POINT OF RATIFICATION WHEN CHINESE SUDDENLY
POSED NEW DEMANDS, INCLUDING CLOSURE OF CHINA
AIRLINES OFFICES IN HONG KONG AND GIVING OF "PRECEDENCE"
TO PRC FLIGHTS, SO AS TO PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY
OF TAIWAN AND PRC AIRCRAFT BEING ON GROUND AT KAITAK
AIRPORT AT SAME TIME. EMBOFF ATTRIBUTED STIFFER
PRC DEMANDS AT THAT TIME TO CONCESSIONS CHINESE
OBTAINED FROM JAPANESE IN THEIR AIR LINK DISCUSSIONS
JUST PRIOR TO EXPECTED RATIFICATION OF UK-PRC
AGREEMENT.

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